



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Edgardo Garcia

SUBJECT: PARK RANGER PROGRAM
JOINT PATROLS

DATE: May 17, 2019

Approved

Date

5-22-19

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on January 29, 2019 for Item 8.1¹, the City Council accepted the Park Ranger Program Status report and a memorandum from Mayor Liccario directing staff to return during the 2019-2020 budget process to discuss and determine whether to shift Joint Patrols out of voluntary assignment via Secondary Employment Unit (SEU), and into standard patrol.

During Item 8.1, discussion took place surrounding what actions can be taken to reduce or eliminate the threat of danger faced by Park Rangers, who have been experiencing increased threats of violence from patrolling around creeks and waterways. As discussed in the Park Ranger Program Status Report from Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) as part of the aforementioned City Council meeting, PRNS and Police have been utilizing joint patrols with one Park Ranger and two Police Officers²; however, these joint patrols do not occur when Police Officers do not sign up for these additional shifts, which are beyond their normal 40-hour work week.

ANALYSIS

At this time, making joint creek patrols as part of the Department's standard patrol duties, instead of voluntary assignments through SEU, is not feasible due to current staffing levels. Doing so would impact the patrol beat structure by taking patrol officers out of the beat and assigning them to creek patrols. This would create empty non-staffed beats in certain areas, which will increase response times and decrease officer safety for the remaining officers. Patrol officers assigned to a district/beat are responsible for responding to 9-1-1 calls and other emergencies in their specified areas.

¹ Link to 1-29-19 City Council Agenda Item 8.1 Park Ranger Program Status Report:

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3835743&GUID=BAA74597-A7D5-4AA9-A5A8-34F488E838F8&Options=&Search=>

² Link to Park Ranger Program Status Report:

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6981024&GUID=8702ED62-B736-4566-BEA0-5FA85E1E80F3>

May 21, 2019

Subject: **Park Ranger Program Joint Patrols**

Page 2

Historically, the Park Rangers are responsible for creek patrols, however, they have been limited in the performance of that function for a variety of reasons listed both in the aforementioned City Council and Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee memoranda. In order for the Police Department to perform creek patrols on a permanent basis, the Department would need to reestablish a parks unit, which currently is not feasible. The Police Parks Unit would have specialized training in how to safely maneuver and work in a creek environment, have specialty vehicles like SUV's and motorcycles, and be allowed the flexibility to work outside of the normal 9-1-1 beat structure.

Staffing levels are still limited as the Department continues to restore units that were either reduced or dismantled in previous years. Priorities such as detectives for the Bureau of Investigations and officers for the Traffic Enforcement Unit continue to top the list of priority staffing. The Department's first priority is always to address violent crime and the overall safety of San José residents. For this reason, assigning officers to conduct creek patrols as part of a regular shift is a lower priority, at this time. Currently, creek patrols are voluntarily assigned through SEU. While recent adjustments to the timing of when creek patrol shifts begin has improved staffing assignments, the Administration has taken several actions in the near term to improve creek patrol coverage.

The City has entered into a memorandum of agreement with the Santa Clara Water District for the creation of the Stream Stewardship Law Enforcement Program (SSLEP). This \$200,000 one-time pilot grant, which will be recognized as part of the 2018-2019 Year-End Clean-up process, creates three teams of six police officers and one sergeant to actively patrol and work in creeks belonging to the Water District. This collaboration between the Department and Water District works to identify problem areas for both outreach and proactive enforcement, and allows for 19 planned operations that run from May 2019 through January 2020. Costs for these operations, which will be conducted on a voluntary overtime basis, will be reimbursed by the Water District. The 2019-2020 Proposed Operating Budget also includes one-time funding of \$275,000 for Police overtime staffing to assist Park Rangers three days per week, including Saturday patrol, to abate homeless encampments and prevent future re-encampments along creek sides and surrounding areas. While the patrols will be funded by overtime, these shifts will continue to be administered through SEU.

In 2018, the Department reestablished the Street Crimes Unit. This unit's responsibilities address quality of life crimes in various parts of the city to include parks and creeks. The Department has already seen a marked increase in park and creek patrol and enforcement. Continued dialogue and collaboration between the Street Crimes Unit, Park Rangers, and supplemental secondary employment officers would continue efforts toward a common goal.

Going forward, actions will be considered to continue joint patrol overtime funding as part of the 2020-2021 budget development process based on the Police Department's and PRNS' evaluation of the program effectiveness and anticipated need in 2020-2021.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

May 21, 2019

Subject: **Park Ranger Program Joint Patrols**

Page 3

Park Rangers share the responsibility for public safety and the Police Department recognizes that there are long-term steps to address the challenges of their safety. The safety of the Park Rangers (and all employees) is a high priority for the Police Department.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department and the City's Manager's Budget Office.

/s/

EDGARDO GARCIA
CHIEF OF POLICE

For additional information, please contact Police Captain Jason Dwyer at 408-537-1891.